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Session 4 D Providing Equal opportunities: What works in the integration of youth with a migration background?

Introductory remarks

Mrs Solveig Horne, Minister of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

Thank you, Chair. Dear delegates...

The immigrant population in Norway is younger than the rest of the population. These children - born to immigrants in Norway - shall have the same opportunities to succeed in our society as the children of ethnic Norwegians.

We can see several positive signs that we are heading in the right direction. Young people born to immigrant parents have a higher rate of participation than their parents, both in higher education and in the labour market.

The aim of our integration policy is to ensure that immigrants – and of course young people especially - become part of and have a sense of belonging to the Norwegian society.

Good language skills, participation in education and working life are a key to belonging.

Our general policies, measures and programs include immigrants and their children.

The political platform of my Government states that

” It is important that all children learn Norwegian early so they can start school with good prospects of success.

The Government will enhance language development and the use of Norwegian in kindergarten to prepare children for school and education”.

In Norway most children attend kindergarten before they start school. This also applies to most children with an immigrant background.

By attending kindergarten children will achieve improved language and social skills, and then be better prepared for starting school.

The evaluation of the project free core time in kindergarten confirms that immigrant children scores significantly better on tests in reading and mathematics in first and second grade when they start school.

In the budget for 2015 we are investing in new a special program for low-income families - offering *free core time in kindergarten*. Giving children the possibility for learning from an early age – this will be of great importance for small children with immigrant background.

Other important issues for me are the relationships between parents and children, and the guidance and help to good parenting in Norway.

The International Child Development Program (ICDP), has been very successful in helping immigrant families in good parenting.

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Children and young people with immigrant background should not face more barriers than other children and young people, either in the community or in their families.

Learning the codes of good parenting and expectations towards parents involvement in school and leisure activities – is important to secure children's social inclusion.

I have just launched an action plan to intensify the efforts against violence and abuse against all children – called *A good childhood lasts a lifetime*. It combines the joint efforts of four ministries.

We also have targeted initiatives to combat forms of domestic violence - like female genital mutilation, forced marriages and serious restrictions on young people's freedom. This is a work done in close cooperation with the organizations from civil society.

Prevention and early intervention are important and effective measures in all our work.

My Government is concerned about extremism among young people. Like many other European countries we have young ones leaving to fight in Syria. It is an important goal that young people have a sense of belonging to our society.

We must address the underlying problems that breed extremism and terrorism in all its forms. To improve the preventive efforts to combat radicalization and violent extremism my Government launched an action plan in June this year.

The plan is a framework for targeted, strategic efforts in this field. The goal is to reach persons who are at risk as early as possible and to meet them with effective measures.

There is a clear need for more information, more cooperation and better coordination of the work. There are several measures in the plan - directed at young people.

Young, well integrated citizens are the building blocks for the future. Our common future.

I am looking forward to learn from other delegates and exchange views on this important subject.

Thank you for your attention!